Food as Medicine: Funding Medically-Supportive Food & Nutrition through Medi-Cal

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Background: Food as Medicine

• Food insecurity is prevalent and impacts health care costs and outcomes

Economic Research Service, USDA, 2016; Adapted from Seligman et al. NEJM. 2010;363:6-9
Background: Food as Medicine, cont.

• Growing body of evidence that providing food **improves health outcomes** and **reduces health care costs**

![Diagram showing health impact of food as medicine](image)
Our Goal

Public *and* private health insurers include medically supportive food interventions as a covered medical benefit.
Opportunity = CalAim MediCal Waiver
Waiver: Process

• Every 5 years, can expand access to services or coverage for individuals or programs not traditionally eligible
  – In Lieu of Services
  – Flexible Services

• Precedent in MA and NC → Medicaid pays for food based supports

• Once approved, MediCal health plans opt-in
CalAim Waiver: Food as Medicine Details

• Certain populations with chronic medical needs or disabilities would be provided medically supported food and nutrition services as part of their MediCal benefits
CalAim Waiver: Details, cont.

- Great opportunity to expand MediCal’s medically tailored meals pilot

Our Ask to DHCS:
- Expand the definition of medically-supportive food and nutrition
Example Covered Benefits

- Food prescriptions (e.g., produce prescriptions, healthy food vouchers)

- Administrative, application, and enrollment support
  - Linkages to additional food supports (CalFresh, WIC, food banks, etc.)

- Transportation support for accessing healthy food to prevent or manage chronic disease
Position Paper
Jan 8, 2021 – Included in the waiver!!!

CALIFORNIA ADVANCING AND INNOVATING MEDICAL PROPOSAL

Meals/Medically Tailored Meals

Description/Overview

Malnutrition and poor nutrition can lead to devastating health outcomes, higher utilization, and increased costs, particularly among members with chronic conditions. Meals help individuals achieve their nutrition goals at critical times to help them regain and maintain their health. Results include improved member health outcomes, lower hospital readmission rates, a well-maintained nutritional health status and increased member satisfaction.

1. Meals delivered to the home immediately following discharge from a hospital or nursing home when members are most vulnerable to readmission.

2. Medically-Tailored Meals: meals provided to the member at home that meet the unique dietary needs of those with chronic diseases.

3. Medically-Tailored meals are tailored to the medical needs of the member by a Registered Dietitian (RD) or other certified nutrition professional, reflecting appropriate dietary therapies based on evidence-based nutritional practice guidelines to address medical diagnoses, symptoms, allergies, medication management, and side effects to ensure the best possible nutrition-related health outcomes.

4. Medically-supportive food and nutrition services, including medically tailored groceries and healthy food vouchers.
Potential Impact

• State and Federal Investment in Social Determinants of Health

• Increase access to food for millions of Californians through their health insurance
Asks and Next Steps

- Medically-Supportive Food and Nutrition Survey

- Attend SPUR’s panel on Tuesday, February 16th at 5pm [Healthy Food as Preventative Medicine: California and Beyond](#)

- Spread the word about the CalAim Waiver and this important opportunity to integrate food into health care

- We’d love to come back with updates
Questions? Comments?

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